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A Christian Context For Counseling

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A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT FOR COUNSELING

Wanted: A Christian Context for Counseling

This discussion will undertake the exploration of some of the relations between Christian theology and the theory and practice of counseling. This is an increasingly pressing problem which has been too little reflected upon, not only by theologians but by counselors as well. Modern counseling has a curious lineage. Its hoariest ancestor is the ancient art of sympathy and shared wisdom, which is surely older than written history. Its often none-too-well remembered grandparent is the Christian ethic, with its recognition of and concern for the worth of human persons and its ideal of human community. But its immediate parent is modern psychology, which makes the kindred social sciences its aunts and uncles. Such a heritage creates an understandable confusion and instability in the offspring. The spirit and intent of counseling betrays its ancestry in high religion. But its techniques and middle axioms are predominantly controlled by the materialistic and mechanistic assumptions of the prevailing systems of psychopathology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry. When religious persons have sought to avail themselves of the therapeutic aids of modern psychology they have often found themselves in the anomalous position of trying to adopt methods and reject the assumptions on which those methods *apparently* are based. If we accept the practical insights which behavioristic psychology and psychoanalytic theory admittedly afford us, are we thereby committed to follow them in their conclusions about the nature of the human self, freedom and responsibility, and their positivistic notions of truth and reality? It would indeed be a painful choice if we have to decide between the Christian account of man and his destiny, on the one hand, and the doctrines of modern psychology, on the other. It is the thesis of this essay that no such choice is required of us. Rather, our task is that of assimilating the practical wisdom of the psychologist, however secular and mechanistic his own world-view may be, to the basic and perennial first principles of the Christian faith and Christian theology.

This sort of thing has been done many times before in the history of Christian thought. Origen and Augustine claimed Plato for Christian theology, but they did not hesitate to set this wisest of the Greeks in a Christian context. In the thirteenth century, Aquinas set out to renovate current theological maxims in the light of the newly discovered *Physics* and *Metaphysics* of Aristotle. In the eighteenth century,

it was Newton who had to be baptized. Darwin and Comte gave theology its new assignment in the nineteenth century. In our day, Freud, Marx, Pareto—and their kind—are the gadflies who will not let the theological ox doze quietly. There *are* Christian first principles that cannot be surrendered without fatal compromise. But, given these, the Christian theologian who takes God's truth to be universal may assimilate to them wisdom of many sorts, even from unlikely sources.

What is wanted is a Christian *context* for counseling. Contemporary Christians cannot afford to ignore the solid growing results of scientific studies in psychology and sociology nor can the scientists, for their part, continue to remain complacent about their crude, mechanistic assumptions—the dramatic news about the atomic bomb adds terrible urgency to the demand that science submit its awesome powers to the guidance and goals of ethical religion. I cannot pretend to offer to you the explicit details of a concordat between Christian theology and modern psychological theory. It will be enough if I can make you aware of the immense importance of the task and if I can illustrate some of the ways in which it may be worked at with good hopes of progress.

Consider the counseling situation itself. As its simplest, it consists of two people, both of whom are concerned to solve or improve a human situation which is, for some reason or other, out of balance or control. Who *are* these people? What qualifies one to help the other and what makes one need help? What are the limits within which this sort of help is possible? What are their common goals and what are the norms by which success or failure may be gauged?

Any effort to give fundamental answers to questions such as these leads out beyond the ken of mechanism and positive science and raises issues which are essentially theological in form, to which theological answers must be given. What does it mean to be a human person? How are the jams into which we mortals fall to be accounted for? Is there any clue to the human predicament which explains the mystery of evil without explaining it away? What are the moral possibilities and responsibilities when one person undertakes to help another? Is there an honest way beyond human tragedy? How does one contribute something to the repair and remaking of his social environment? What sort of education is required to guide a growing person into the most adequate realization of his potentialities?

These questions, which arise naturally from reflection upon the counseling situation itself, suggest the topics with which we must con-

cern ourselves. None of them is new to Christian thought. All of them have been mulled over by Christian minds for centuries. And it is in the light of this traditional Christian wisdom that we shall try to relate our answers to the concrete problems of counseling. Our answers will certainly not be final; they may not even seem profound. But they will constitute a challenge to counselors to look more closely and critically than ever at their own prior questions. All counseling goes on in a larger context of assumptions and presuppositions. There is such a thing as a Christian context for counseling and its claim to superiority is simply that it is truer to the facts of human existence and divine reality than any materialistic context whatsoever. The Christian teachings about personality and the good life are of direct relevance to good counseling. Finally, Christian faith is of paramount importance to the counselor himself, just precisely because it makes him a more adequate person and thus able to act more adequately in his personal dealings with the persons who turn to him for help and guidance.

The Human Person: Focus of Counseling

Every thoughtful counselor has some sort of answer, express or implied, to the Psalmist's question, "What is man?" And upon his appraisal of what it means to be a human person will depend, in large measure, his treatment of human persons. The Christian answer always begins with the elemental premise that man is a creature, God's creature. No man is his own creator; his creative initiatives—real and significant as they are—are always responses to prior initiatives from outside and beyond himself. Man's joyous acceptance of his creaturehood is the hallmark of authentic Christian trust; it is the ground of true humility and self-acceptance. Ignoring or rebelling against the fact of creaturehood is the straight way to frustration and insecurity. Counselors need occasionally to remind themselves that in all their dealings with persons there should be the unspoken qualification, "as between us creatures."

But to insist that man is a creature is by no means to despise him. The Christian faith has affirmed, with equal energy, that man is the crown of creation, the creature bearing God's image within his inmost self. Man has the unique capacity deliberately to co-operate with God's creative purposes, consciously to respond to God's manifest love with his own. This means that personal relations are primary, both between God and man and between man and his fellows. If this be true, then

it follows that no man can rightly be regarded simply as a means, a tool of other men, however virtuous their pretensions may be.

The most important implications of the assertion that personal relations are primary is that man is *a free and responsible self.* He is not God's nor nature's puppet, for the very essence of his self-consciousness is the experience of obligations which *claim* but do not *force* his loyalty. No man rids himself of the feeling that his acts are *his* acts nor is he ever quite willing to be treated by other persons as though they were absolved from an equal claim of responsible behavior. It is because he is a responsible self that man must respect himself and every other person; this is the valid basis for the notion of "reverence for personality." But man's freedom is not unconditional; we tend to lose it if we use it either in the assertion of our selfish wills or if we surrender it in uncritical loyalty to some partial social good. Man's freedom flowers as he responds to the claims of the highest good—"Almighty God, . . . whose service is our perfect freedom."

But the human person is not a solitary being; he is a creature designed for *life in community.* Only as he lives with and for other persons are his own personal values realized. And it is in that ultimate community, the Kingdom of God (the commonwealth in which God is sovereign) that Christian faith has anchored its ethical ideals and goals. The viable force in Christianity is not its creeds or ethical maxims but in its communal life, the shared life of those made one and loving in Jesus Christ. It is this visible, historical community which has been the carrier of the Gospel and it is in such a community that personal life is raised to its grander dimensions. Loyalty to such a community does not abrogate our proper loyalties to the partial communities of blood and soil to which we naturally belong; it simply warns against the fatal idolatry of regarding those communities as absolute.

Christian faith has further affirmed that man is a creature with eternity in his heart. Our earthly lives are never more than fragments. When life is lived significantly, death always comes as an interruption. Theories of immortality are many; some are naïve, some are subtle. But deeper than our theory is the Christian soul's invincible surmise that the universe does not cast us on its junk heap, but that our lives are planned to be a whole, completed in God's good time and in His presence. No such creature as we are is ever utterly mean or worthless. To be human is to live in two worlds.

Even so hasty a sketch as this of the Christian answer to the prob-

lem of human nature has genuine relevance and meaning for the counselor. It sets significant limits upon him. It requires the suppression of his "Yahweh complex." It forces him, more earnestly than ever, to wrestle with the temptation that besets all pedants and stuffed shirts: to roll one's pearls down an inclined plane. It demands of us that we neither deny nor evade the fact that we have our treasure of wise counsel in frail earthen vessels. This Christian perspective sets the person counseled in a new light as well. He, too, is God's creature—of incalculable value, the bearer of a sacred trust. Therefore, he must not be regarded as an item in a statistical average, or even as a "patient," a "case" or "a problem." He is a person, deserving of his full mead of dignity, affection and human recognition. Only some such attitude will establish the right rapport between the counselor and the person counseled. Anything less tends to corrupt or stultify the counseling relationship.

The Christian understanding of what it means to be a human person rules out both the mechanistic and the idealist answers to the question. The behavioristic doctrines of the self (e. g., like those of Marx, G. H. Mead and Freud) ignore the subtle and profound ways in which man transcends nature, even as he shares in its processes. The counselor must be steadily aware of that in himself and in his friends which transcends the categories which spectatorial science may provide. It is his bounden duty to be as objective and rational as he can be, but he will always be sensitive to the heights and depths of meaning and value in every personal experience. His reverence for personality need not make him sentimental; it will certainly save him from a calloused soul.

Counseling techniques based upon idealist versions of human nature are equally inadequate, but for a very different reason. They are tainted with environmentalist and Utopian fallacies which usually issue in a sort of quixotic winsomeness and a heroic refusal to see windmills as windmills, sheep as sheep and men as men. The Christian doctrine of man seeks to be steadily realistic. It has room for all the objective data which the social sciences can bring to it; it welcomes the prophetic visions which a baptized imagination may afford.

To know what we really are is the first step toward becoming what we ought to be. It was when the prodigal son came to *himself* that he made the decision that put him on the road back to his father's house.

The Clue to the Human Predicament

That there are human predicaments, no one has ever thought to deny. But Christian faith has gone on to affirm that there is *a* human predicament, a single, fatal, universal declination away from God's loving purposes for His children, which accounts in significant measure for the misery and tragedy of human life. This is an unpleasant topic to muse upon but it thrusts itself upon us now as never before. The strange way in which the macrocosmic evils which whelm the world show up in the microcosms of individual misbehavior is sufficient evidence that man is a tragic problem to himself. The jams and snarls and wrecks of life, which show up in the persons we seek to counsel, and too often in ourselves, are all symptoms of a deeper, more basic, moral and spiritual disequilibrium, common to man as such.

Let us attempt a rough and amateurish typology of the various ways in which human beings get "off the beam." There are, first of all, the jams due to *ignorance.* These are manifold and likely to increase in a technological civilization. But these are the counselor's delight, for they can usually be repaired with a minimum of net damage and a maximum of pedagogical satisfaction. Then, secondly, there are jams which come from *deficient judgment.* These are more difficult because they involve the emotions and orectic thinking of the counselee. Thirdly, there are the jams which are due to *undisciplined appetite.* These are still more complicated than the first two because their outward symptoms always mask some inner deterioration of the self. In the fourth place, there are the jams which result from *the clash of aggressive wills* in life's forum or marketplace. In a competitive society, a premium is often placed upon what is plainly one of the most fruitful sources of moral — and emotional — maladjustment. And such cases are exceedingly difficult, for what is desired by the person counseled is a first-aid job, or at least, a rationalization and defense. Jams of the fifth type are due to the fundamental aberrations: (1) evasion of reality; (2) hypersensitivity to rejection; (3) what the medieval moralists called *accidie* (a sour mixture of irritable slothfulness and prideful despair). These latter, by the way, are the typical sins of cheerless respectability.

Notice that in this list there is a common factor, which increases in intensity in rough proportion to the complexity of maladjusted situations. This constant can be identified if one observes that human tragedy is compounded, not by outer circumstances but by *inner estrangement,* alienation from self, one's fellows and from God. Both the bibli-

cal myths and modern psychological metaphors agree that this feeling of alienation is the clue to the human predicament.

The libido of the infant is naturally self-centered but there is no theoretical reason why this self-regarding thrust of life should not be progressively sublimated throughout the enlarging concentric circles of family, clan, race, nation, etc. Somewhere in the business of growing up, however, this infantile self-enchantment gets jarred and begets anxiety. Anxiety tempts the self to greater efforts at self-protection. But these efforts are always inordinate and break down rather than build up discipline (the reason for this, of course, is that man is a finite creature). Thus man's freedom and man's finiteness war to bring him to disaster. Anxiety leads to sin, the strange fruit of sin fails to allay anxiety and prompts to yet intenser, more inordinate and futile strivings for security. This is the vicious circle in which Judy O'Grady and the colonel's lady may be partners in a tragic dance.

Masked and disguised in a thousand ways, by manners, modesty, morality and neurosis, there is in us all that fierce desire to be masters of our own fate and, often, the fate of others as well. We resent our creaturehood, we would reject our dependence upon the veiled providence of God. And this is man's rebellion and unbelief—and this is his alienation from his own true good.

If the root of original sin is self-enchantment, the main branches are pride, concupiscence and curiosity. The assumption of inordinate pride is that there is no specifiable limit to our worth; the assumption of inordinate concupiscence is that there is no specifiable limit to our *aggressive* power; the assumption of inordinate curiosity is that there is no proper limit to our *knowledge*. The fruits of this tree are sweet to the taste but bitter in the after-taste; they starve and poison the soul.

The favorite ways of escape from this circular trap are striving for increased knowledge and striving for improved virtue. But both have the same danger that any treatment of symptoms always has. They may, and often do, act as opiates and nourish complacency and spiritual pride, the most deadly of all mortal sins. The earnest and impenitent moralist is clearly in greater danger of final sterility of life than the confessed and contrite sinner. It was the publican who went down to his house justified because he made no effort to blink his abject need for God's forgiveness and the removal of his sense of alienation.

Such an interpretation of the human predicament throws unex-

pected light upon many facets of the counseling process. In the first place, it illumines the counselor to himself, since we, too, are human, all too human! In the second place, the doctrine of the ultimate simplicity of the human predicament affords a unified criterion for the diagnosis of any particular jam or crisis in a person's experience. Thirdly, it throws the whole question of moral sanctions and consequences into new perspective. The frustrations which dog man's way are essentially *self*-frustrations. Whatever difficulties a man's environment may create for him, they cannot ultimately defeat him if his personal resources are adequate. Our real defeats do not come from things; they come from ourselves. This, incidentally, suggests a crucial distinction which needs to be made in any discussion of "progress": the difference between progress in man's mastery of nature and progress in man's self-mastery. Finally, the Christian clue to the human predicament forces the counselor to concentrate upon the moral and spiritual attitudes of the person counseled.

The Christian answer to this human predicament is the good news of God's love supremely manifest in Jesus Christ. It is not enough for man's lot to be improved; he needs must be made over. The gist of the classical Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is the adequate personal, historical manifestation of God's love and will-for-man, so that in Christ and through Him the anchor of man's love is shifted from self to God, and all man's partial loyalties find their consummation in joyous trust and glad obedience to God's will and gracious rule. This is what it means to be reconciled to God: freely and gladly to put one's destiny in God's keeping and to share, responsively and responsibly, in God's working in His creation. It has been the experience of countless Christians in every generation that this "justification by faith" ushers a man into a new order of living, a world of peace, of freedom from anxiety and insecurity, a world in which God's imperatives are made tolerable by the assured gift of God's grace and power. The Christian man is no longer alienated from God nor from himself. Fear, rebellion, idolatry, and self-seeking—these are no longer needful props for his faltering ego. Evil and suffering are not abolished but the resources for moral victory are at hand and one sees the honest way beyond tragedy.

This, or something like it, the Christian counselor must understand if he is to guide the person counseled beyond the particular crisis and its solution to a genuinely effective re-integration of will, feeling and thought. The mystery of saving faith is not bestowed by any man upon

another; we do not perform the miracle itself simply by describing the process as far as we know it. But the counselor who can give to a ready mind and seeking heart a solid assurance that such a transformation of life is "at hand" and who can put him in the way of preparation for the experience itself, will certainly be doing something more significant than all the good advice and sympathy in the world can avail. Counseling is the art of friendship raised to a higher power. If the counselor is a Christian pilgrim, he can recall the way he himself has come from the Slough of Despond and he can point out to others the way as yet unwalked that leads on towards the City of God.

The Christian Ideal of Human Fellowship

The Bible is a book about personal encounters, between God and men, between men and men. It is not surprising, therefore, that Christianity made the individual human person the primary unit of social value. Thus it discovered that the essential basis of human fellowship is neither justice nor pity, but *mutuality*. The patterns of relation in a truly good family are more nearly the norm of Christian fellowship than any ideological utopia in which abstract justice is the ideal. This verdict has been confirmed both by modern existential philosophy and modern counseling theory. Mutuality between counselor and the person counseled means that the counselor must carefully refrain from violating the freedom, dignity or creativity of the person counseled, no matter how sure he may be that his advice is infallible. But if this limits the scope of counseling, it enriches its spirit.

In "I-Thou" relations, what does mutuality require of us? In the first place, it calls for a solid *sense of security*. The child psychologists have told us about the elemental need of the infant and young child for emotional security. We need not accept the hypothesis that emotional patterns are *irrevocably* fixed in childhood in order to agree that a sense of security is *sine qua non* for effectual human living. To feel that one is wanted, that one really "belongs" and shares in the circle of life around him—all this is indispensable to a poised and unanxious adjustment to one's social situation. This circle-of-belonging needs to be enlarged as life develops until at last man comes to feel that he is "at home in the universe," that God loves him, accepts him pretty much as he is and regards his sharing in the divine purposes with neither cynicism nor condescension. The primary cause of insecurity is the suspicion that one is unloved. A man is literally lost when he does not

have an active sense of being beloved by other persons and by God, not because of what he can do, but because of who he is. The good counselor is one who can give such an authentic sense of security to the person counseled, or can at least allay the loneliness of the unloved.

A second thing that is required, if a human relation is to be mutual, is *objective recognition* of a person's own peculiar gifts and skills. In a good family, the members know what each other can do and give encouragement and praise to a job well done, rather than making unrealistic demands from motives of family pride or utility. This is not a mark of indulgent love. It simply means that mutuality does not call for identical ability nor literal equality. The important thing, in any group, that each one can feel that his gifts matter to the whole and that his status does not depend upon any competitive ranking.

The third prerequisite for mutuality is *liberty*. Human liberty, or moral freedom, does not mean the power to alter natural processes or to act by sheer caprice. It means the capacity, consciously and responsibly, to participate in decisive events in such a way as to feel uncoerced and at least partly responsible for the outcome. There can be no mutuality of persons where this kind of freedom is infringed. It is this kind of freedom that God has bound Himself to respect.

The Christian ideal of human fellowship, then, is built upon the three pillars of security-in-love, recognition-of-personal-worth, and the essential inviolability of each human soul. The first steps in enduring friendships are those which lessen aggression, express respect, reveal real interest in what one can do, and surround one with unobtrusive affection.

The implications of all this are of paramount importance for good counseling. It means that the good counselor is concerned about the basic causes of the feeling of insecurity of the person counseled, seeks to discover and appreciate his gifts and is sensitive to any infraction of his moral freedom. It means that the counselor can do nothing for the person counseled *against his will,* that no solution is a good one if its acceptance is forced. Our efforts at analysis and persuasion may go just as far as they remain persuasive and do not become interventive. The counselor must not only be willing for the person counseled to reject patently good advice; he must, with all the skill and patience he can muster, help him to discover *for himself* the right path forward. When another person stands before you, in admitted distress, it is often difficult to realize that this same person, whose weakness is so plain, is the

only person in the world, or out of it, who can choose his way and walk in it. Yet this is actually the case. God surrounds him with His providence and prevenient grace. We may give him all the help we can, but we must avoid, as we would shun sacrilege, the effort to tinker with his soul or to haul him, with no matter how well-intentioned dominance, up to the altar or into the ark.

Jesus did a superb job of counseling with his twelve apostles. He gave them a sense of security. He had a strange confidence in their gifts, he was patient with their purblindness and their repeated failures to comprehend. He loved them without condescension, which made it possible for him to rebuke them without hesitation. He worked at the social and economic problems which confronted him, but most of all, he worked at the inner transformation that would give them new freedom and new power in a hostile world. His affection for them was uncalculated; yet it did not blind him to their faults. But just as he would not call upon his miraculous power to inaugurate the Kingdom or to perform selfish miracles, so also he was willing and able to wait until the leaven of truth worked in their hearts. He even lost one of them. But he taught mankind something that we may one day learn, that mutuality amongst men and mutuality between God and man is the highest and fullest human blessedness and joy.

Christian Social Perspectives of Counseling

Every Christian context is a social one. The first great commandment is religious; the second is ethical. Communal righteousness is as truly a divine imperative as is a personal integrity. The counseling process is therefore bound to take into account the kingdom of social evils which degrade and dehumanize and violate human personality. At the same time, it must proceed with a clear vision of the social ideals of that Kingdom of God which is the true and ultimate community of man. And yet the Christian counselor will evaluate the problems of social pathology from a sort of Archimedian point which falls outside the secular table of social values. The Christian social ethic presupposes a transcendent order of life, a community of persuasion, mutuality and love. The natural social order is not to be condemned nor despised, but, by the same token, the Christian norms of social value transcend those of earthly commonwealths. The classical term for this Christian concept of a new social order is "The Kingdom of God." The phrase was not invented by Jesus but his proclamation of it gave a new

meaning and context. The Kingdom of God is God's righteous rule within human hearts and amongst the human community. It is a rule of moral authority rather than coercion; it is the order of love rather than of law. The chief ends of this Kingdom are the glory of God and the blessedness of man; the way of life in this Kingdom is essentially familial. Thus, the paramount Christian social values are *loyalties* rather than *rights.*

Within such a Christian social perspective, the counselor may proceed to help the person counseled to an objective and accurate analysis of his social situation. He will look first at the social relations which are primary factors in every situation: family tensions, social status and economic pressures. Normally, his service is to help the person counseled to a clear appraisal of the way in which these factors bear upon his emotional and moral problems, for it is only in the rarest cases that the counselor is called upon to issue invitations to the revolutionary barricades.

But the good counselor will not stop with analysis. He will be aware of the available resources of social machinery and welfare which can be marshalled for the positive solution of the difficulties of the person counseled. This is a point which has been so amply expounded and illustrated in this conference that I only mention it in passing. But it has been my experience that there is always more social machinery available for adequate service than is being made effective use of at any time. The counselor is the most important link between the person in need and the social agencies equipped to meet his needs.

Beyond the concrete and immediate help he may afford, the Christian counselor will seek to guide the person counseled into the inner meaning of social evils, rightly dividing between those which can be cured and those that must be endured. He will know that it is bootless, from the Christian standpoint, to rail against one's family, one's social status, one's economic lot—merely in the name of some abstract doctrine of human rights. "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are not inalienable rights and it is not self-evident that all men are created free and equal. However, valid in speculative theory, such notions remain abstract and subjunctive. But there is a concrete and inalienable human right which remains: the right *to be recognized and treated as a person.* This is a question of fact. To deny, either in word or deed, that a person *is* a person, is not only a sin, but also an error. It is this sort of error we commit when we tag a person with a group-label

(American, Methodist, Negro, banker, "returning serviceman," college professor—the stereotype may imply a favorable or unfavorable value-judgment) and then proceed to treat him as a particular instance of the social universal under which we have him classified. At bottom, what most of us want most, or really feel that we deserve, is to be regarded and treated *as a human person,* whose race, class, profession and other "accidents" (I use the term advisedly but in its medieval sense) are properly judged to be secondary. For example, most of us would agree, perhaps, that it is far less satisfactory to be treated as "college professors" than as human beings. This is, as I take it, the practical meaning of the Christian doctrine of "the worth of personality" and of Kant's analogous teaching about the importance of persons as ends and not as means only.

The counselor will always, therefore, begin by recognizing the person counseled *as a person* and he will try to teach him to regard himself as a person and act accordingly. It is a great service to have some one help us to strip off the labels by which we are rated in society and re-value our social values in terms of our common and irreducible humanity. It is the best way to objective self-respect (particularly if our social stereotypes are discriminatory); it is the surest way to true humility (if our stereotypes have conferred automatic prestige).

In the second place, the counselor will seek to guide the person counseled in the achievement of what is called, in counseling jargon "social competence." This is a complex social ability which combines emotional balance with the learned skills of social poise and adjustment to the demands of successful social intercourse. There must somewhere be a place of punishment for the counselor who merely trades the tricks and secrets of winning friends and making use of people. But he will be doing a great and lasting service to the person counseled if he can help him to gain that inner poise and harmony which makes possible easy, natural and happy contacts with a large gamut of fellow-men.

A third, and still higher, level of service will be the effort to find for the person counseled a "we-group" of real quality and significance. This is ordinarily an immediately feasible service, and it is the counselor's business to know what are the possibilities in his community or elsewhere where such a group will receive the person counseled and accord him real security, recognition and liberty. The steadying power and the stimulus to creativity which a "we-group" affords is not only a

great and present good but it also helps one to abide the time until more radical social improvements are forthcoming. The moral basis of the group is crucial. If it is simply a pressure-group, it will narrow the social vision of the members; if it is simply a mutual admiration society, it will lull them into pious desuetude.

The highest level of service which the counselor can offer the person counseled is to invite him to join in the larger ethical enterprise of the Christian social ethic, together to dedicate themselves to the tasks of social renovation, to exhibit God's righteous rule in their hearts and lives. This is the mint mark of the Christian context for counseling.

Counselor and person counseled, we are all *homines viatores,* men on life's pilgrimage. We can only join with others or invite them to share the road with us. The bystanders will never know that the jostlings of the fellow-pilgrims are bonds of fellowship which uphold us on our way.

A Christian Context for Higher Education

Thus far we have been talking about the relatively formalized procedures of counseling. In this final section, I wish to broaden the scope of our inquiry to include those factors which come from the educational situation itself that influence the counseling process. Education might be roughly conceived as a nonformalized counseling process. The school, the college and the university inevitably, then, are a part of this whole business of counseling, and counseling becomes, in one fashion or another, the responsibility of every one who has a place in the educational enterprise. Not every professor is fitted for formal counseling, but each one leaves some sort of deposit in the growing intellectual and emotional capital of the student. The context of general education is, therefore, of prime concern to every counselor and a Christian context for counseling requires that the wider context of education conform to Christian principles.

The all-but-unanimous discontent with education in America today has a sobering implication. We have come to the place where partial repair and minor improvement are futile. The time has come when we simply must recast our educational philosophy in new and unaccustomed perspectives. But where shall we begin? Thus far, the search for the clue of renovation has centered mainly about the problems of curriculum. Here the Deweyites damn the Hutchinsites and are damned, more colorfully, in return. Out of all this debate, interesting and im-

portant, the most impressive summing up may be found in the Harvard report, issued under the title *General Education in a Free Society*. It is worth every educator's careful reading and pondering. Not so comprehensive, but of equal moment, is the report of the Committee on the Course of Study of Yale College.

Yet in this dispute about curricula, another equally basic factor in education has been somewhat ignored or overshadowed. What about the character and quality of the human fellowship in the academic community? Education is a social process, a communal affair, and its purpose is not merely to provide the proper curriculum for the developing intellect, but also the most favorable atmosphere, moral and spiritual, for the growing person. The fault with most schools and colleges is not merely that their curricula are out of joint, but that *they are actually unwholesome places in which to live.* They are not *communities* but agglomerates, assortments of people without shared fundamental traditions or convictions. Premiums are offered for amassing information or acquiring special skills in particular intellectual disciplines, rather than for the search for synoptic vision and intellectual virtue; the approved aim is intellectual competence rather than personal excellence.

By Christian standards, however, a school or college is a seminary, a seedbed of human personality, whose goal is the excellence of the whole man, sound in body, ordered in intellect, disciplined in will for decent and sturdy living. A good college, by these norms, would be a *community of people* living together and mutually dedicated, for the time of their residence, to the common good of their several "minds, bodies and estates." The intellectual disciplines and competence of these people are important; but so also are their social competence and moral character.

If education is thus essentially communal and moral, then the life of a school or college must be conceived in terms of the integration of life, of the harmony of intellectual and ethical excellence; or, in a word, religion. Religious faith is the outreach for wholeness of life and truth. Religion (not partisan nor obscurantist) is, therefore, a proper and legitimate concern of any school or college which is concerned with the whole life of its students and faculty. This does not mean that the college exists to make its members prophets or priests. Rather, it implies that there should exist a fundamental agreement amongst the members of the community as to the importance of the religious quest and the

religious focus of life. It would be a natural part of such an agreement, I think, that formal courses in religion would have a rightful place in the curriculum, not to dominate it, but to provide competent guidance for students to learn to think critically and competently about religious problems. Out of such courses would come real enrichment of thought and understanding. But the most important influence for religion (for good or ill) on any campus will always come from a person's experience in the shared life of the community.

The academic community can be fairly judged by its human products. These products include not only the men and women who graduate, but the women and men who never graduate but continue to live on in the community as teachers and administrators. A college whose students, alumni and faculty are indifferent to the social imperatives of justice and freedom is simply a parasite in a democratic order; one which ignores the values which the combination of sound learning and high religion afford is derelict to its highest responsibility.

Counseling in a college community is deeply conditioned by the community's inner temper and *esprit de corps.* If we are to deal constructively with the human problems of men and women whose lives have been deeply etched by the acids of war, we shall be seriously handicapped if the spirit of our school or college is philistine or secular or atomistic. On the other hand, counseling which goes on in an atmosphere of liberty, democracy and creativity is doubly effective. The counselor's stake in the reform of education, then, is obvious. The education of yesterday is literally not good enough for tomorrow. The curricula of our schools and colleges will have to be reorganized. But, certainly as important, we have got to dedicate ourselves to the task of building human community in a world shattered by violence and scarred by the malignant wounds of war; and this calls for the truth and power of Christian faith. If our schools and colleges can be made into communities of common concern for truth and goodness, they will be the seedbeds for men and women of real quality, fit for the challenges of the era upon whose threshold we stand. It is this context for counseling, essentially a Christian context, which, as I profoundly believe, holds our best hope to find the way through the complicated labyrinth of the years ahead.

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